

Studies in Christian Growth

by
Bill Dillon

Published by:

J.C. Choate Publications

Winona/New Delhi/Singapore/Cebu City/Jakarta/Cape Town

© Copyright 2001, J.C. Choate Publications

Manuscript Preparation: Dorothy Henderson

Proofreading: Eulene Ramsey

Layout and Design: Barbara A Oliver

Cover Design: Betty Burton Choate

Printed in U.S.A., 2001

This printing, 2,000 copies

World Evangelism Publications

P.O. Box 72

Winona, Mississippi 38967

Phone: (662) 283-1192

E-Mail: Choate@WorldEvangelism.org

Web site: www.WorldEvangelism.org

www.GospelGazette.com

Publisher's Statement

How can one survive without growth? He can't. Growth is the natural process for every living thing, physically and spiritually.

The Lord said that one must be born again, born of the water and the spirit (John 3:3-5). The water has reference to baptism, and Paul said that baptism is a burial (Colossians 2:12). Paul also said in Romans 6:3-7, *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."* Buried in what? Buried in the waters of baptism as the Ethiopian was in Acts 8. With a burial in water, there is the coming up out of the water, which is the new birth that has already been mentioned. But another way of describing new life is that when one is buried in the waters of baptism, and comes up out of the water, that is said to be a resurrection — a resurrection to a new spiritual life. How beautifully that is described.

Now, after the birth has taken place, one is said to be a new creature in Christ. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ,*

he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). But how does one **enter** Christ? By baptism, according to Galatians 3:26,27. Then as a new creature or baby in Christ, in order to grow and develop, one must have food for nourishment. Peter says, "*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby*" (1 Peter 2:2). But what is the milk in this case? It is the *word of the Lord*, the simple and basic truths of the Bible. As one feeds on God's teachings, he grows and develops as a Christian and becomes strong enough to feed on the deeper things of God, which is said to be the meat of the word. The Hebrew writer explained, "*For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even to those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil*" (Hebrews 5:13,14).

Christians cannot remain immature and weak as babies all of their lives. They must read and study God's word, and exercise by using their knowledge to teach others. As they live for God and practice pure New Testament Christianity, they will grow and develop and become strong in Him. The proof of growth will be the good fruit that they will bear, bringing honor and glory to the Lord as they labor to spread His cause throughout the world.

I commend brother Bill Dillon for the good sermons he has written and preached by means of radio to help bring about the kind of spiritual growth that is so needed in the church today.

Dedication

Thomas Joseph Dillon

May 23, 1971 -

January 30, 1988



Jeffrey Scott Dillon

February 22, 1975 -

November 8, 1991

This book is dedicated to my two sons. They were brothers in life and are now companions in eternity. It is my fervent prayer that the messages in this book will help others also to inhabit heavenly bliss.

Foreword

God intends growth in the physical, animal and human realms. God demands growth in the spiritual realm (2 Peter 2:1-5; 3:18). That which God intends certainly does interest people if they feel it will benefit them. They will avidly pursue growth physically, intellectually, personally and fiscally. What about spiritual growth? Are we interested?

Bill Dillon has written this book of sermons on the most important and essential area of all human development — Christian Growth. This type of growth begins with the Bible — the source book for all spiritual advancement. It includes a proper assessment of life and that which is our most valuable possession — our soul. It follows through with our obedience to Jesus Christ and faithfulness to Him throughout life. This book fills a void of works to be found in this vital area. It will help us to become better teachers, preachers and practitioners of that wonderful spiritual growth that begins here and ends in heavenly glory.

Dennis Gullledge
Mabelvale, Arkansas

Introduction

It is hoped that these messages from the air waves will find new life by means of the printed page.

Special thanks to Dorothy Henderson for investing many hours of precious time in typing these programs.

These lessons deal with the fundamental theme of "Christian Growth." In these times, it is amazing how many people are interested in personal growth and advancement through night schools, seminars and other avenues of self-improvement.

May God bless these messages so that all may "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

Bill Dillon

April, 2001

Mountain Home, Arkansas 72653

Table of Contents

1. "Why Study the Bible Anyway?"	1
2. Studying the Bible	9
3. What Is Your Life?	18
4. The Power of Christ to Change Lives	25
5. The World's Most Valuable Possession	33
6. Christ and Character	40
7. Essentials of the Christian Life.....	47
8. Vital Truths from the Word of God	56
9. Human Suffering.....	64
10. Trust in God	73
11. Worshipping God	81
12. Be Not Weary in Well Doing	88

“Why Study the Bible Anyway?”

Introduction

The expressed feelings of multitudes of people is, “Why study the Bible anyway?” The Bible has become the unbook: unopened, unread and unappreciated.

Good morning to all listening. This is the Words of Life gospel broadcast. We trust all to be well with you today. This morning we answer the question **“Why Study the Bible Anyway?”**

Before we get into the lesson, allow me this opportunity once again to invite you to attend the worship services of the Mountain Home Church of Christ.

Come with:

A Bible in your hand
A friend by your side
A smile on your face
A song in your heart.

Discussion

The word of God is common today. The Bible is so common now that it is **too common**! That is, people have lost their sense of its preciousness. The Bible is now taken

for granted — it is there if they want to read it, but why bother with it? So the Bible remains unopened, unread and unappreciated today. The question is “Why Study the Bible Anyway?”

1. **The only way to learn God’s will is to study God’s word.** In other words, to learn God’s will you must study God’s Word. His Will is His Word.

An ancient King sought to know the natural language of man. So, upon the birth of two babies, he ordered them placed in the care of attendants in an environment where they would never hear a human voice spoken. What language would the infants grow up to speak if never exposed to any known language or tongue? At length, when the boys were grown, they were summoned before the King. All that the King heard were unintelligent utterances and gibberish. The point is, no one can learn a language without becoming familiar with it; **nor can any man learn the language of heaven, the will of God, the revelation of divine truth, unless he becomes familiar with it!**

The very thoughts and ways of men are vastly different from God’s ways and thoughts. No man can know the thoughts upon a matter apart from God’s Word itself. How can any of us know what is right and wrong; how God looks at sin; how God expects us to live; and what He will do with us in eternity — except as we learn it from God’s own Word?

One day in the long ago past, the aged prophet flung out the ringing words:

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8,9).

And listening friends, know this, it is easier to inherit religious beliefs than it is to study out those beliefs for yourself. It is not enough to say, “Well, my mother and father believed such and such and I’m going to believe it too!” or “My preacher or pastor, Rev. So and So, said this and he speaks for all of us”. My friend, don’t let that happen. You study the Bible for yourself. Whatever your Bible says, you believe it, no matter how many others say differently! **The Bible is right. It was right yesterday! It is right today!! It will be right tomorrow!!!**

Don’t accept the convictions of others. Second-hand religion is no religion at all. Be as the Bereans of old, of whom it is written:

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).

2. The only way to refute false teaching is to study God’s word.

You see, some believe that doctrine doesn’t make a difference: you can believe anything you desire and it doesn’t

matter with God. This is one of Satan's greatest lies. It does indeed matter what you believe. Think about this for a moment, **if it doesn't matter what you believe; then it doesn't matter what you believe.** Isn't that right? If not, why not?

Notice what Paul said to the churches of Galatia:

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

But how could the Galatians have known a false gospel unless they heard and knew the true gospel? How can you detect the false if you don't know the true? You can only become familiar with what is true and genuine by diligent and daily study of the Bible.

My friends, the doctrines and commandments of men are more plentiful than ever. 1 John 4:1 tells us to *"believe not every spirit, but try (test) the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."*

A careful study and close adherence to the eternal truth of God's Everlasting Word is the only guarantee we have of being free from false teachings of men.

3. The only way to have victory over sin in our lives is to study God's word.

The Bible stowed in our hearts will help us to gain victory over temptations that so frequently assail us. The Word of God will enable us to have success in our lives. The word "success" is found but one time in all the Bible. The passage is Joshua 1:8:

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

Here success is linked to a careful contemplation of God's Word.

David once wrote:

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11).

If your heart is filled with goodness (such as is found in the Bible) then that will help give you the victory over sin; if the heart is filled with the grime of bad literature then agony of sin will be manifested in your life. Fill your mind with the good, great, grand and glorious teachings of the Bible and your life will experience the victory of faith.

The issue is clear:

Study or sin!
Learn or lose!
Read or ruin!

May the Word of God be treasured up in the hearts of all men.

4. The only way to learn life's greatest lessons is to study God's word.

Do you want to develop better character to become a better man or woman? Do you wish to know how to be a better parent? Son? Daughter? Do you wish to learn how to develop leadership skills? Improve your ability to get along with other people? Is guilt a problem in you life? Would you like to get rid of those feelings of remorse? Would you like to learn how to start life over? Get a new beginning? Would you like to know about forgiveness? To get forgiveness? To give it? Do you have trouble in your marriage? In your family? Friends, **I could go on and on like this all day, and not exhaust the list of benefits one gains from the study of a book like the Bible.** But none of this information can help you unless you get involved right away in an organized program of Bible study.

Conclusion

The greatest life-changing power in the universe is **the Word of God**. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 says God's Word works in believers. The mightiest power under heaven can do nothing **for a person, in a person, or through a person** until he/she believes. But the Bible can so totally and so completely change the life of an individual that the best way to describe it is by saying "a new creation". *"The old has*

passed away, behold, everything is new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

This power to radically alter life is not limited to any race, age, or nationality. God's Word touches young and old; married and single; black and white; educated and uneducated. It touches the well-to-do as well as the homeless. The drunkard, thief, immoral, dishonest, unbelieving — all can be changed by the simple, yet awesome, power of the Bible's message.

If husbands and wives took to heart what the Bible says about holy matrimony, divorce courts would be put out of business.

If neighbors treated other neighbors as they should (as the Bible teaches), frictions and quarrels would cease.

Changes are not brought about by threats and demands, but by the transforming power of the Bible. **But such power to change is not yours unless you study the Bible and live the Bible.** The great apostle Paul said,

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1,2).

The question we want answered about any product is,

“Will it work?” Friends, the Bible works! Wherever people will **study it diligently and live it seriously — it has worked!** It will work for you.

If you are not a Christian become one today by faith, repentance, confession and baptism.

May God grant that we study His divine holy word.

Thanks for being with us today.

Studying the Bible

Introduction

The Bible is the all-sufficient book. The Bible contains everything that every person will ever need to go from earth to heaven. In fact, the only thing the Bible really lacks is study and meditation on the part of those who claim to believe it.

Good morning, friends. How are you this day? We are pleased to have you tuned in to our broadcast.

A good way to begin a new year is with a strong resolution to become a better student of the Word of God. That is what our program today is all about **“Studying the Scriptures.”** My friends, a meditation upon God and His Word is absolutely essential to Christian growth and faithfulness.

Before we get into the lesson, however, allow me to give you an invitation to visit with the Mountain Home Church of Christ in our worship services today. We meet at 9:30, 10:20 AM and 6:00 PM and each Wednesday evening at 7:00 PM. Come with:

A Bible in your hand
A friend by your side
A smile on your face
A song in your heart.

Discussion

The Word of God, or the Bible, is supernatural in origin, divine in authorship, human in penmanship, infallible in authority, infinite in scope, universal in interest, personal in application, regenerative in power, inspired in totality and always up to date. Yet, despite all of that, many individuals seem unable to find the time to read, study and meditate on its precepts! But, my friends, a study and meditation of the Bible is essential to spiritual growth and mental happiness. Listen to Joshua 1:8:

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

God’s people, all down through the years, have always been known to meditate upon God’s Word. Isaac did: *“And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide”* (Genesis 24:63). David likewise did:

“I will meditate in thy Precepts” (Psalm 119:15).

David also stated in Psalm 119:23, *“Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.”* We could survey the lives of all of God’s men and women of faith and discover much time in their lives was spent in studying the sacred scriptures. That was one secret

of their faithfulness to God. They purposely retreated from the hurry of life in order to think upon God's goodness, His greatness, His glory, His power, His justice, His mercy and His grace. Time so spent is time well spent.

My friend, how faithful do you want to be in God's sight? To that same extent, you must study and meditate on God's Word. David said: "*O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day*" (Psalm 119:97). The happy man, the truly blest man, is the man who follows David's outstanding example: Psalm 1 declares:

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

Unknown to most people is the fact that an individual's subconscious mind never rests or is never idle; never still. Whatever a man thinks upon and meditates about in his conscious mind will be the very thing that his subconscious

mind feasts upon long after his conscious mind fastens itself upon something else. That is why Proverbs 23:7 says, "*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he . . .*". You just can't think on lustful things one minute and have a pure heart the next. You cannot lend your thoughts to material things during the week and be truly spiritual on Sunday. While it is true one must have his mind upon his work if he does his work well, yet a man ought to fill his waking hours with high thoughts and noble dreams. In fact, everything about our lives should be related to God; as Paul said in Acts 17:28, "*for in him we live, and move, and have our being*". Hit and miss meditation on God will result in hit and miss living for God!

1. Meditation upon God's Word will increase our understanding about ourselves, others and our world around us.

David stated as a fact: "*I have more understanding than all my teachers; for thy testimonies are my meditation*" (Psalm 119:99). The Bible is a wonder book of knowledge regarding human nature. You might say it is the "owner's manual" that helps us when we need fixing or repair.

The Bible is so written that it can be grasped and understood. Ephesians 5:17 says:

"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."

2. Meditation upon God's Word makes the child of

God unashamed of that Word.

David again stated: *"Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed"* (Psalm 119:80). The fact is that when men and women consider the price paid for their salvation, the harm sin in our lives does to God who loves us, the fleetingness of time and the endlessness of eternity; when people weigh the blessings of God against the curses of God it will not be long until they lose all their ashamedness of the Bible. When an individual comes to believe that he or she is in a victorious cause, they will care little what others may say by means of ridicule. When God's people meditate upon the mightiness of God, they will care less and less what scoffers may say in derision. When we come to know the power that is in every line, verse and word of the scriptures, then we will less and less become concerned about what others may do in opposition to the gospel. Meditations on the Word will keep you from being ashamed of the Word.

3. Meditations upon God's Word causes the child of God to delight in that Word.

Once more the words of David come to mind:

"I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved, my hands also will I lift up unto the commandments, which I have loved: I will meditate in thy statutes" (Psalm 119:47,48).

Why does thinking about the Word result in delight for

the Word? Because Jesus said: *“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”* (Matthew 6:21). When you truly delight in something you can’t get enough of it.

People disbelieve the scripture and the stern warnings of the Lord and are often willing to compromise the truth of the gospel because they are not well acquainted with the teaching of the Bible to know better. Concerning the Bible:

If you will study it — you will know it.

If you know it — you will love it.

If you love it — you will do it.

IV. Meditation upon God’s Word makes people happy with God. Men today will be less critical of God the more they think about God. When things happen that don’t suit us and seem to turn our plans upside down, meditation upon God and His Word will reveal that God will work out all things according to the counsel of His own will. God will work out all things for the best. Let us not be too quick to lay blame and fault at the feet of God.

The man or woman who is given to meditation can say with the Psalmist, *“My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord”* (Psalm 104:34).

4. Meditation upon God’s Word leads people to obey that Word.

One of the chief objectives in meditation is to obey what is known or discovered to be true. Multiplied millions learn

the Bible who never obey the Bible. They know the Bible in fact but not in act!

By studying the scriptures, you can discover a rich treasure mine of gospel jewels. When Paul referred to the gospel as "unsearchable riches", he may have had in mind this very thing. They are unsearchable in that no one could have found them out without God's revealed Word. But, they are riches indeed to be had by the man who will dig for them in the Word that God has revealed to us for our benefit.

When men are constantly frail in their spiritual lives; when men never seem to be able to grow as they should; the cause of such is a lack of paying attention (meditating) upon the will of God.

Study the Word and absorb it into your life and you will be unshakable and unmovable in all the shifting sands and destructive storms of life.

5. Meditation upon God's Word is essential to proper Christian growth.

1 Peter 2:2 says:

"As newborn babies, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

If you wish to make the most of your life then **learn the word and do the word**. And *"what thou doest, do quickly."* The difference in a half-way servant of God and a

whole-hearted servant of God is meditation on the Word of God.

Paul's desire for Timothy was: *"Till I come, give diligence to reading, to exhortation to doctrine . . ."* (1 Timothy 4:13-15). Meditation upon spiritual realities is the down-to-business spirit; the diligent-servant attitude; the concentrated effort; the moving-power behind the soul that drives a man on to success in whatever he undertakes, especially spiritual success.

May the Lord help us all to be more conscious or aware of the need to:

"Take time to be holy,
Speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in Him always;
And feed on His word.
Take time to be holy,
The world rushes on;
Spend much time in secret
With Jesus alone."

Conclusion

Spend time in this New Year in Bible study and learning about God. Or in the words of a poet:

"It matters not what others do,
For God has left a standard true.
I'll search its pages day by day,
And pray for courage to obey."

Another writer put it this way:

“The word of God, the Bible, is the book above and beyond all books as an ocean is above a puddle, as the sun is beyond a candle. The Bible reveals the complete will of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners and the happiness of believers. It has light to direct you, food to support you and comfort to cheer you. Its doctrine is holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true and its decisions are immutable. It is relevant to our every need and fresher than the morning newspaper. It is the fountain to cool our hot faces, the pillow on which saints of all ages have rested their heads, it breaks the fetters of the slave, takes the heat out of life’s fierce fever, the pain out of parting, the sting out of death and the gloom out of the grave.”

My friend, do you know of any book more necessary or needful than God’s Book? Jesus said in Mark 16:16:

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

Thanks for allowing us this brief radio visit with you. May God bless you at the beginning of this New Year. Good day.

What Is Your Life?

Introduction

Good morning to all listening. We trust things to be well with you this day — as well as can be.

One thing we all have in common is — **we are all alive!** We dwell in the land of the living (physically living) but in a true sense we are in the land of the dying. But, how are we living our lives? Our subject this morning is “**What is your life?**” Before we proceed further:

Come with:

A Bible in your hand
A friend by your side
A smile on your face
A song in your heart.

Discussion

Life is God's gift to you. What you do with it is your gift to God. Our lives are loans and payment is expected of us.

The New Testament book of James informs us:

“Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life?”

It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:13,14).

What James is saying should be pretty obvious, but most of us don't consider the importance of what he said. We just don't know what tomorrow holds. It is not given to us poor mortals to look into or otherwise know the future.

My friend, have you taken the time to properly analyze your life? Many people have a tendency to evaluate life in terms of dollars and cents and material possessions, but Jesus said, *“a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15).*

Others are inclined to view life as they respect worldly wisdom and personal, selfish accomplishments. **The real need is to view life as God sees it.**

The question under consideration is a personal question. **“What is *your* life?”** Things are sometimes heavy with irony. You may pity some other person who is in failing health, but **your life may be over before his is!** You may criticize the other person for wasting his life, but in light of eternity, **“What is your life?”**

A man's true worth is not to be measured in dollars and cents. It is not what we own in material goods, but what we are within and the actual fruit we produce in our lives and our ability to influence others for good that really counts. It is not an uncommon expression to hear someone say, “How much is a certain person worth?” Meaning, how much

property does he own or how big is his bank account. Although this is the way the world measures the worth of an individual, Jesus cautions us not to use this standard of success.

The thing that really matters — the only thing that matters — is what we accomplish in our life for God. A poet wrote the following truthful rhyme:

“only one life will soon be past;
only what’s done for Christ will last.”

My friends, if we could only get it into our hearts and minds; **if we could only realize how unimportant the things are that the world holds so important!!**

One particular woman, who was lying on her deathbed, dying of cancer, came to realize true values, and she said, “The things in life that have always seemed so important to me now mean nothing, and the things that were before so unimportant, now seem important.”

There are some things we need to point out from God’s Word, that should have a heart searching effect upon our lives.

1. Your Life Is Troubled

Job 14:1 declares that, “*Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble.*” And trouble it is.

Our human existence is beset with many frailties, sickness and accidents. It is almost frightening when you con-

sider all the possible diseases that could claim our lives. The medical world knows a multitude of diseases, yet they continue to discover new ones such as Legionnaires' Disease, AIDS and the Ebola Virus.

In addition to all those diseases, think of the many ways in which one's life can be lost or taken in accidents. Perhaps you have had a close call or two in which this has been impressed upon your mind. I do not speak these things to scare you, but rather to move you to the place where you would be sure that your life was submitted completely to God.

Unstable world events on the news every night remind us how uncertain life is. An assassination in Israel; violence in Somalia; a famine in West Africa; an earthquake in Japan; fires and floods in California; and kidnappings, robberies and murders most everywhere. The more and more we consider such events as these, the more we are determined to live our lives as God would have us. We should remind ourselves of the necessity to subject our plans to the will of God. James was correct to say:

"For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that" (James 4:15).

It is not wrong to plan for the future as long as we include God in all our activities and plans. We must remember life is full of trouble and we need to make sure of eternity.

2. Your Life Is Transitory

James tells us that our life is *“but a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away”* (James 4:14b). The Psalmist said life was like a “handbreath” (Psalm 39:5). Life on earth is not permanent. True, you may live to a ripe old age, but friends, what is one hundred years after they are through? Life on this earth, at its longest, is not even an introduction to eternity.

It is not what we have been or what we will be, but what we are that really counts. Psalm 90:12 says:

“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

Paul brings out the same fact when he writes in Ephesians 5:17 for us to “redeem the time”.

How are we spending all “the days of our lives”? Someone may say, “I’m just killing time.” But they are not really killing time; the truth of the matter is, time is killing them!

Time past is forever gone. How many have said, “If I had it to do over again, I would do things a lot differently”? Probably you would make the same mistakes and have the same regrets all over again. Though we can’t relive the past, we can take care of the present and the future!

3. Your Life Is Terminal

We are all terminal, aren’t we? Some are just more ter-

minal than others. James said: *"It appears for a little time, and vanishes away"*. Unless the Lord comes first, there is no escape from death. Hebrews 9:27 says:

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

Regardless of your race, social status, or position you will keep death's appointment. Ecclesiastes 8:8 says:

"There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it."

A four-year-old boy was talking to his mother one day about death and heaven. The boy summarized what he knew by saying, "One day God is going to say, you come here; ready or not, you're going to die". Friends, that is an accurate appraisal of what is going to happen.

Conclusion

Each and every day we are reminded that in the midst of life, we are in death. Be prepared for when death comes. The Bible lays down principals by which we are to live our lives and govern how we spend our earth-days.

Have you turned you life away from sin? Someday that will be the most important consideration on your mind. Repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins — and don't wait to do it. It's too important! If you've been

unfaithful to the Lord, I encourage you to be restored to the fellowship of God, without delay.

Let's make our lives count for God. We only pass this way one time. There's no coming back. There's no living over our lives; however, with God, there is a **new beginning** as you turn your life in the Lord's direction. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says:

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

My friend, live your life in such a way that tomorrow will be happy and eternity will hold no regrets for you.

Thanks for being with us.

And good day.

The Power of Christ to Change Lives

Introduction

Everything about Jesus Christ affected men for good. The master soul winner and character builder associated Himself with wayward men and women and wrought marvelous changes in many lives. Jesus Christ can change lives. He can change:

- tears into triumphs
- rocks into roses
- barrenness into fruitfulness
- suffering into singing, and
- heartaches into hallelujahs.

Good morning to all listening. Welcome once again to the “Words of Life” gospel broadcast. This morning’s lesson is all about **“The Power of Christ to Change Lives”**. Is there something in your life you know needs to be changed? With most of us, there is much that needs to be altered and adjusted to make things better.

Before we get into the message we invite you to come with:

A Bible in your hand
A friend by your side

A smile on your face
A song in your heart.

Discussion

The power of Christ to change people's lives for the better was evident in His words of mercy, His touch of kindness, His glance of compassion, His embrace of firmness, His heart of understanding, His tears of concern, His prayer of anguish, His broken-heartedness over sin and His precious blood. All of these Jesus used to alter and change men and women for good.

Peter Was Changed

It was Jesus who changed Simon Peter from the profane denier of Matthew 26 into the intrepid proclaimer of Acts 2. What an astounding transformation took place in the apostle's life! Jesus truly brought about a heart-warming difference in the life of Peter. Has Jesus changed your life in a similar way?

The Demoniac Was Changed

It was Jesus who confronted a stormy, restless, demon-possessed man and changed him into a quiet and submissive person. Mark 5:5 speaks of this man:

"And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones."

Jesus came, and Mark 5:15 says

“And they came to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.”

This unfortunate man was a hopeless wretch until Jesus delivered him from his asylum of misery. At the last, he found serenity of soul at the feet of the Redeemer. Indeed, the Lord has altered the course of many such vain lives and made them into obedient souls. Has Jesus changed your life as He did the demoniac?

John Was Changed

There was a time when words of retaliation fell freely from the lips of the apostle John:

“And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?”
(Luke 9:53,54).

Now listen to John's words many years later as he exhorts the brethren:

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1 John 4:7).

Between the time he said, “Let's kill them” and the time

he said "Let's love one another", something occurred that changed John. John had become better and better acquainted with Jesus Christ and His ways of love. That was the difference. Has your spirit of vengeance been replaced by the spirit of tenderheartedness?

The Samaritan Woman Was Changed

It was Jesus who changed a Samaritan woman's life of shattered romances into a faithful witness for the truth. In John 4:17,19 the text says:

"The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet" (John 4:17,19).

The woman was a five-time loser in the marriage arena. What a pitiful and unchaste social outcaste she was. Yet, note in John 4:29:

"Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

The woman was transformed from a life of shame and scandal to a faithful voice declaring, *"Is not this the Christ?"* (John 4:29).

Indeed, the Lord has favorably altered numerous lives for good. Has His sweet influence been noticed in your life?

Saul of Tarsus Was Changed

Saul of Tarsus was a blood-thirsty persecutor described as *“breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord”* (Acts 9:1). This blood-thirsty Saul thought he was doing God a service by his actions. When he, at long last, met Jesus on the road a marvel was wrought in Saul’s life. The heavenly voice said, *“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”* (Acts 9:4b). Later, in the city of Damascus itself, Saul was given further instructions on what to do:

“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

Many years after his conversion Saul, also called Paul, expressed the true depth of his conviction regarding the cause of Christ:

“Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).

Saul of Tarsus was bitter against the Christian religion, but he was touched and changed. By the influence of Jesus, Saul became a brother of tender compassion and an apostle of unwavering faithfulness.

The Philippian Jailor Was Changed

The Philippian Jailor, in Acts 16, was a hard-hearted prison keeper who found out that he could become a converted and sympathetic fellow servant of Christ. Acts 16:24

tells of the imprisonment of Paul and Silas:

“Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.”

Now, observe Acts 16:33:

“And we took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.”

A mob rose up against Paul and Silas and caused the preachers to suffer wrongful imprisonment and beatings. The cold-hearted jailor put their feet in stocks with no more concern or sympathy than if he had liquid nitrogen running through his veins instead of blood.

Then, the earthquake came and the Philippian Jailor was pulled from imminent suicide by the timely intervention of Paul and Silas.

As the jailor became better and better acquainted with Jesus Christ, he took Paul and Silas and washed their stripes and cared for their blood-matted backs. Has your life been touched for good like the jailor? Have you done what the jailor did to change your life? He was told *“to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”*. The record also states:

“And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway” (Acts 16:33).

My friends, in every instance noted, the lives of these individuals were set on a downward course; downward to death and destruction; downward to doom and despair; downward to decay and depression; downward to disbelief and denunciation; downward to darkness and disappointment.

Do not miss the point of this lesson: **The Power of Christ to Change Lives.**

Jesus can:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| - touch your life | - inspire your hopes |
| - direct your steps | - satisfy your spirit |
| - save your soul | - rekindle your fire |
| - sanctify your life | - restore your zeal |
| - mend your marriage | - bless your heart, and |
| - lift your burdens | - dry your tears. |

And more. . .He can

- fill up that which is empty
- build up that which is weak
- clean up that which is corrupt
- lift up that which is fallen
- cheer up that which is sad, and
- fix up that which is broken.

My friends, always remember the power of Jesus to change lives. When worry grips you; when stress paralyzes you; when aggravations plague you; when difficulties oppress you; when resources fail you and when hardships

hinder you, just remember, He can change you!

Conclusion

It is necessary to note that the astounding life-changing power of the Son of God works in harmony with the will of man. That is, if your life is changed, God will not overrule your will and force the needed changes upon you. Things will change only if you will allow and desire the changes: you are the key. The matter is in your hands and in your control. You must freely accept God's will for your life, if change is to occur. God will not "twist your arm". He loves you so much that He has given you free choice to say "yes" or "no" to Him.

If your life needs changing, you and God together can make the change and you and God together can keep the change.

Thanks for being with us today.

The World's Most Valuable Possession

Introduction

Contained in the world are many, many valuable possessions. Some of these possessions are so vast and so valuable that it is difficult, if not impossible, to estimate their true worth. In Matthew 16:26 Jesus Christ verbally constructed a set of balances. On one side of the scales He put the wealth of the entire world. That would include anything and everything of value: all the oil in the fields of Saudi Arabia; all the diamonds in the mines of South Africa; and all the gold in Ft. Knox, Kentucky. All of it. Every last ounce of this world's wealth. On the other side of those scales, the Lord put the human soul. Then Jesus stated that the soul outweighed all else! Listen to the Lord's words:

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

Jesus taught that the soul of man is worth more than all the world.

Good morning, friends. Welcome to the "Words of Life" gospel broadcast. We trust that all is well with you today. This morning we shall talk about "The World's

Greatest Possession.”

We are delighted you are listening to the broadcast this morning. At this time, allow me to invite you to attend the worship services of the Mountain Home Church of Christ.

Before we get into the message we invite you to come with:

A Bible in your hand
A friend by your side
A smile on your face
A song in your heart.

Discussion

My friends, there are a multitude of very valuable possessions in our own nation as well as in the world. But, know this: lands, buildings, bridges, towers, skyscrapers, real estate, stocks, bonds, automobiles, fantasy-lands, magic-worlds, mega-malls, etc. — none of these nor all of them combined are the world’s most valuable acquisition.

Several years ago the prominent men of the world bore names like Roosevelt, Hitler, Mussolini and Churchill. Where are they now? None are alive today. That’s the way it is. A heart flutter, a death rattle in the throat and it is all over. Surely, the world’s most valuable and important possession **is not something that death can end.**

What?

In 1 Corinthians 4:9, the apostle Paul said:

“For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.”

Paul said he felt as if the full spotlight was upon him in the world's theater of shame. What was Paul doing that caused him to be a spectacle, a gazing stock to the world? What caused Paul to go hungry and thirsty, to go without proper clothing and without a home? Was Paul seeking regal riches in one of the Fortune 500 Companies? Was he looking for gold mines? Oil wells?

What was Paul's concern when he endured great sufferings, being beaten with rods, shipwrecks, being stoned, wrongful imprisonments, slander, false accusations, in prison at midnight with his feet fast in stocks and with a bleeding back? What was foremost in the thinking of Paul when he wrote:

“Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31).

What was it that so troubled Paul's mind that it brought tears to his eyes both day and night? Listen again to him as he says:

“And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house” (Acts 20:20).

What was Paul seeking that caused him to tramp from house to house with hot tears flowing down his cheeks. What was Paul's concern? Not fame or fortune? Not money or wealth? Friends, the thing that moved Paul with such **passion** was the world's most valuable **possession**. He stated in Romans 10:1:

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."

Paul realized the soul of man as the most valuable thing in the world. His concern was that men — all men — whether Jew or Gentile, might be saved. With every heart beat, this man of God must have felt a tug for the souls of men.

The scripture that many refer to as "The Golden Text" says that *"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son..."* We ask, what part of the world did God love? The trees? rocks? or the buildings? Oh, no! God's Son was given on behalf of **the souls of human beings; Jesus died for souls, not structures**. Because of souls, Jesus came from glory; because of souls He was robed in flesh; because of souls, He was shamefully beaten; because of souls, He bled and died on the cross.

In the long ago, Jesus stated He had to leave the earth in order *"to prepare a place"* (John 14:1). A place for what? A place for the soul of man.

Do you know what causes rejoicing in heaven? Not a

presidential election; not the end of some war or crisis on earth; not man landing on the moon or astronauts flying in space; not the Razorbacks winning another title, or the Braves or Cardinals winning another World Series; **heaven rejoices over souls that are saved!!** Listen again to what Jesus says:

"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10).

Why?

The soul of man is more valuable than **anything** and **everything** because it is the **only thing** that is eternal. Truly, as the old song says, "The soul of man never dies." The soul of man is everlasting. When this old earth and every last thing in it is wrapped in flames and is hurled into space for destruction, the soul of man will continue to live on. When the stars and moon cease to shine, the soul of man will live on. When the sun grows cold and gives no light, the soul of man will live on and on and on. The day comes when we all will tremble in the face of eternity.

What is most frightening is that the souls of many will spend eternity in hell. In Matthew 13:50 Jesus said:

"And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Again, it is written:

"And these shall go away into everlasting punish-

ment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Matthew 25:46).

My friend, unless your heart is made of stone you should be horrified of the prospect of one soul going to hell. When the Bible talks about eternal torment, people’s tongues hanging out and the cries for water to relieve their thirst, do not such thoughts move you?

My friend, the most terrible fact that ever fell on human ears — is the fact of a **literal hell** — and the fact that many precious souls are headed that way!!

The soul is valuable also because of the suffering Jesus underwent to save it. Can you see Him? Standing in Pilate’s Judgment Hall with His mouth bruised? spit on His face? His face streaked with blood and His cheeks moist with tears? Finally, nails were pounded through His palms and ankles and He died the most excruciating and awful death conceivable. Truly, the sufferings of Christ cause us to know the value of a soul.

How?

If souls are as important as the Word of God says, then our utmost concern is the winning or saving of souls. Perhaps the greatest quality of a true soul winner is a broken heart. Jeremiah had a broken heart. Listen to him as he says:

“Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction. Mine eye runneth down with rivers of

water for the destruction of the daughter of my people. Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission, till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven. Mine eye affecteth mine heart because of all the daughters of my city" (Lamentations 3:47-51).

The truth is that nothing you have, in soul winning, will take the place of tears. With trembling hands Paul wrote:

"For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you" (2 Corinthians 2:4).

Conclusion

You may say, "I don't have time to think about my soul right now." But someday, you **will** have time. Someday **you will have time to die!** You will have time to ride in the hearse and go to the cemetery. In the day of death, your most valuable possession, your soul, will return to God for judgment. So it will be for all men and women.

Your soul is your possession — now. Tomorrow it may not be. By this afternoon, you may face an Almighty God — a sin-hating God — in judgment.

While mercy lingers, become a Christian. Live in faith and die in faith and your soul will be blest now and forever.

Christ and Character

Introduction

It's not uncommon to hear of our national problems today being spoken of as a "crisis of character". But what exactly does that mean? What is character anyway?

Good morning, friends. Welcome to the "Words of Life" gospel broadcast. It is a true joy to be able to make another radio visit with you.

Before we proceed into our lesson this morning, I take the opportunity to invite you to worship services of the Mountain Home Church of Christ.

Come with:

A Bible in your hand
A friend by your side
A smile on your face
A song in your heart.

Discussion

What is Character?

When you examine the word "character", you find it carries the idea of marking, engraving, stamping, or even branding. "Character refers to distinctive qualities that are engraved or stamped upon an individual's identity."

We should be careful and take heed not to mistake or

substitute something else for character. Reputation is not character. Reputation is what others think of us, but character is what we really are. Reputation is an estimate placed upon us by others, but character is the estimation placed on us by God. Reputation is public property, but character is private property. Men may be great in reputation, but be small in character. Also, men may be small in reputation, but great in character. Some of the most successful generals in history awed and impressed the world by their acclaimed reputations, while in character they were mean, foul and cruel. Alexander the Great had a wide reputation, but a low character. Napoleon had a brilliant reputation, but a vain character. Reputation is not character.

Education is not character either. Some men of little formal education have been men of sterling pure character. Let it also be noted that wealth is not character. Wealth may fashion a man to be great in the eyes of certain other men, but all the money in the world does not necessarily improve the quality or caliber of a person's character, so much as one iota.

In the matter of character formation, every man must do his own building. James A. Garfield stated: "Every man is the architect of his own character." That's correct. You must hew out your own timber, mix your own mortar, lay your own foundation, erect your walls and finish the job to your own liking. Thus it is, my friends, some men build a strong character and another builds a weak one. One builds

with blocks of granite while the other uses straw and grass.

Everything and everyone about us makes a contribution to the overall development and formation of character. Surrounding circumstances, parents, relatives, friends help to create a moral atmosphere in which we must breathe. What we watch on television, as well as what we read and think about, all do their part in whitening or blackening our hearts. There are scores of subtle influences which aid in molding our character for good or bad.

But friends, mark it down as a bedrock truth that **character is made — it is never bestowed. It is earned, never given.** Character is what is written upon the heart and mind. The mind is the canvas — character is the picture upon it. The mind is the vineyard — the character is the fruit.

Indeed, **character counts.** We pity the man or woman who stands upon their appearance, riches or anything else, so esteemed in the eyes of the world, instead of their character. It is in the Book of God that we read:

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee” (Proverbs 23:7).

In addition, we note that **character is within.** Jesus stated:

“And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:20-23).

What Are the Elements of Character?

As regards the materials to be used in building quality character, industry would rank high on the list. To be productive in life and having a mind to work are indispensable materials to the construction of good character. A lazy Christian is an absurdity. Jesus said:

“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4).

Cheerfulness is another essential ingredient in good character. Someone has said it this way:

“Suppose it does rain, and that it is a gloomy day, is this a reason why you should be sad and depressed? Have you not the means within yourself to make you happy? Have you no thought of thankfulness to your Maker for His past goodness, or for the sun that shone yesterday, or for the friends that surround you and made your house a retreat of pleasure? Now, just because a few clouds fill the sky, you are

depressed. Shame on you! A true man will always be cheerful and strive to make others so, no matter how dark it may be above or dreary below. Never again, we pray you, murmur at the weather, or cease to look up with joy, notwithstanding your surroundings."

It is a mark of good character to be of good cheer and not fret and waste away your time due to life's annoyances. Let us go on our life's way making the very best of every situation and circumstance.

Temperance is another secret of character formation. Temperance means moderation or self-control. We should be temperate in the use of our money, words and in all the enjoyments of life. Temperance is a grace that should be practiced when alone or standing before a crowd in a coliseum.

No character can ever be considered of the best quality without truthfulness. There can be no character without truthfulness. Truthfulness is the source of excellence. A truthful man can always be relied upon. He does what he says. He keeps his word.

Virtue is another one of the essential building blocks of character. Virtue is moral strength. Anything that corrupts the mind is to be avoided. Let virtue be reflected in your thoughts, words and deeds. A lack of virtue has brought thousands of people in our land to disease, unhappiness, ruin and death itself. The Bible says:

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8).

Love is another essential item in the building of character. The word "love" embraces a great deal. It includes courtesy, kindness, compassion, sympathy, generosity, benevolence, etc. Without love in life we are reduced to the level of animals and brute beasts. Without love, the hungry are not fed, orphans are not cared for, the thirsty are not watered and truth is not preached. Without love there is no good will toward men.

Love is that strong binding tie that enables men and women to bravely fight life's hard battles. Love thrills the heart with joy and strengthens us to endure hardship and suffering and every icy blast of misfortune. Love never fails. It will never cease. It will carry us through every storm and trial of life.

Conclusion

Everything hinges upon character: what you are in the eyes of God. In the time of death, character will be all that remains.

When time is no more, in the Great Day of Judgment of men, all that will remain is well-built character. To become great in character should be the aim of every man, woman and child. Make good character the sweet music of your life. Do this and great will be your reward in eternity.

The road of good character begins when you recognize

how great is your need of that missing ingredient of life — GOD.

Obey the Lord by repenting of your sins, confessing Christ to be the Son of God and be immersed in water for the remission of sins. Start right today to work at being a better person — building a life of quality character based on the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Essentials of the Christian Life

Introduction

It is good to stop once in a while in our mad rush about “things” and ask ourselves, “What are we living for anyway, and by what rule do we live daily?” Man has made many rules of life. Lodges have promoted ways of life. Economic conditions have forced certain rules and restrictions on us in life. What we really want to know is how God expects us to live the Christian life.

Good morning friends, and welcome to the “Words of Life” gospel broadcast. We are delighted that we have this opportunity to make another radio visit with you. On the program this morning, we shall talk about “Essentials of the Christian life.” That is, three qualities that are necessary for you and me to develop if we are going to be successful in living the Christian life.

First, however, permit me to invite you and yours to the worship services of the Mountain Home Church of Christ.

Come with:

A Bible in your hand
A friend by your side
A smile on your face

A song in your heart.

Discussion

To live the Christian way of life does not mean that we must return to the same means of travel, wear the same type of clothes, eat the same food or live under the same form of government under which the Christian religion had its beginning. We do not have to ride around in chariots and wear robes like Christians in the first century did; however, the Lord Jesus Christ did give certain standards by which the Christian is to live daily that are not peculiar to the first century. But there are unchanging principles appropriate and needed as much today as when God first gave them. It is upon such eternal truths that the Christian life is based. It is such great truths that we take the time to study this morning.

Of all the multiplied thousands of words which make up the English language, perhaps only a few are greater than the words — **faith** — **obedience** — **purity**. These three words summarize and describe the supporting principles of the Christian life. No other words can better describe the life God wants us to live. If heaven is our goal after we die; **we must live God's way**, not our own way. Jesus declared, *"I am the way, the truth and the life"* (John 14:6). He wasn't just exercising His lungs when He spoke these words. They were then, and are now words of everlasting and titanic importance. Truly, we need to think carefully on those three great words: **faith** — **obedience** —

purity.

Let's consider each of these qualities in the light of God's Word

1. Faith

True faith in God is obeying God's Word regardless of circumstances and in spite of circumstances. Hebrews 11:1 says,

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Also, Hebrews 11:6 impresses us with the absolute necessity of having faith in our lives:

"But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

We need a faith in God that has all the intensity of a drowning man. We should believe in God and cleave to Him for all that is within us. Those today that have not faith in God nor keep His commandments will one day meet their Creator and on the great day of reckoning they will be jolted by the reality of the existence of the very God they neglected and rejected. **Faith**, my friends tells the story! And what a difference there is in stories!!

Faith implies a reverence or a devotion and strictness to duty and to the One who is the object of our faith. There is no other teaching as important in the entire New Testament

than the teaching of absolute **loyalty to Christ!** By loyalty, we mean absolute steadfastness in the face of all odds and contrary voices to the allegiance of Jesus Christ and His gospel. There must be a loyalty in life to that which we profess to believe.

2. Obedience

If a life is to be one that is Christian, it must be one that is **obedient**. Faith alone is not enough — our faith must have feet on it — to move into action. Faith without obedience is dead faith. Dead faith is not **capable** of saving anyone.

Please listen carefully to this reading from Romans 5:19:

“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”

This verse shows definitely that our salvation could only come to us through Christ who was in submission to the Father, even to obeying Him perfectly. This is further borne out in Hebrews 5:7-9, which says,

“Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the

author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

Then, we note John 15:10, Jesus says,

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

Only as we obey God in all things He commands can there be honor for us as the people of God. Jesus laid down the principle that a disciple is not above his master, and if it behooved the Master to be obedient, how much more does it behoove us to obey without quibbling and quarreling with the Lord over every word, doctrine and teaching with which we happen to personally disagree. If the Lord and Master bowed in humble submission, how can we claim to be His disciples and claim some sort of exemption from this law?

Some are of the frame of mind to obey God as long as they are in agreement with what God has said. Friends, if we only obey the Lord when our thinking coincides with His, then it is to be questioned if we really obey Him at all. The test of real obedience is to obey God when He tells us to do something for which we do not see the necessity. It is a fact, unappealing as it may be, that God expects us to keep His commandments whether or not it suits our fancy. To be very plain about it, many claim to be Christians who have never really confessed Him to be the Son of the Living God. Others claim discipleship who have never repented of their sins. While others still, when they consider the Lord's

commandment of baptism, have said, "Oh, it doesn't matter what I do about baptism. I can take it or leave it!" Christ gave no such option when He said:

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

The inspired apostle Paul's words leave no room for rejecting baptism.

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26,27).

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:1-4).

When Paul himself was a candidate for conversion, he was told:

"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

Our choice toward the Lord and His Words is really pretty simple: **obey** or **disobey**.

Of course, we must not leave the impression that obedience stops when we get out of the baptism. We must, by all means, go on in all of our lives and obey Him in all the things whatsoever He has said. And that includes “*living soberly, righteously and godly in this present world*” (Titus 2:12).

In the early days of the church, the Lord’s people bannered the world with gospel and by the fortitude of their faith and the strength and constancy of their obedience, they changed the course of history on this planet. Today, the church of the Lord is, at times, somewhat weak and insipid when she comes face to face with devilish powers that are at work. We must get a fresh grip on our loyalty and faith and renew our commitment to Christ and the cause for which He died — even to the point of being willing to die for it ourselves. Paul described the Philippian Church of Christ by saying:

“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain” (Philippians 2:15,16).

We must also notice the principle of

3. Purity

Purity is an almost forgotten virtue in our time. Purity shows, however, a master-piece of Christ-like achievement. How beautiful is the soul of the pure! Jesus said, "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*" But many people today don't go to Jesus for their standard of morality, do they?

There is no doubt, however, that the Lord Jesus Christ expects His church to be pure and holy in their lives. The New Testament bristles with admonition after admonition to both spiritual and bodily holiness.

In our time, sexual permissiveness has provided the wings on which sexually transmitted diseases are spreading. Sex is a gift from God; a beautiful and glorious gift. And with the Christmas season so upon us now, a phrase many will be speaking and hearing in the giving of gifts is **"Don't Open 'Til Xmas"**. Friends, sex is God's gift. When He gives it He says, **"Don't Open 'Til Marriage."** Whenever men, women, boys and girls come to ignore the Lord's teachings about sexual abstinence and monogamous marriage, we will, in time, come to regret it very deeply. This is so, even as we have already come to ignore Jesus' teachings about violence and non-violence. Whoremongering and warmongering are running a tight race in our society. But friends, the teachings of Christ, if heard and heeded, would stop both in their filthy tracks. We are as human beings, very slow learners, but our mental tardiness will be

extremely expensive. The conditions of our country make it imperative that we live free from all impurity.

The words of Romans 13:12,14 sound as needed warning:

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof."

Conclusion

History's verdict is that the **faith** (loyalty), **obedience** and **purity** of the early Christians did even more to conquer the pagan world than the doctrines those believers preached. There is no living the Christian life apart from these divinely given virtues. Let us all resolve to be more and more a people of greater **faith**, **obedience** and **purity**. These three words describe what God wants us to be.

Horace Mann once said:

"Life is a book of which we can have but one edition; as it is prepared at first, it must stand forever. Let each day's actions, as they add another page to the indestructible volume, be such that we shall be willing to have it read by an assembled world."

May God bless you richly as you walk in the light of His neverfailing word.

Vital Truths from the Word of God

Introduction

Good morning, friends. Please listen to the following text from 1 Timothy 4:8,9:

“For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.”

This Bible passage tells us that godliness is profitable unto all things. It tells us that it is profitable for the present life, and it is likewise profitable for the life that is to come. It further tells us **this is a faithful saying.**

Listening friends, it is good to have you with us this morning as we present a lesson on “Vital Truths from the Word of God.” Before we proceed further into the lesson, allow me the opportunity to invite you to the worship services of the Mountain Home Church of Christ. Our church building is located at the corner of College and North Streets. We meet at 9:30 and 10:20 AM and 6:00 PM today and each Wednesday evening at 7:00 PM. The Mountain Home Church of Christ is a friendly group of God’s people living the Christian life as best we can; encouraging others to do the same. We have an active youth program with

Mike Spillman serving as our youth minister.

Come with:

A Bible in your hand
A friend by your side
A smile on your face
A song in your heart.

Discussion

My friends, there are truly many great truths and principles taught in God's Word. Truths that encourage us in right living and give us courage to daily walk with God. Every Christian needs to know these great fundamentals of the faith and rely upon them. In this message, we are going to consider some of these vital truths with the hope that if you have forsaken the Lord or if you are on the verge of backsliding, you will carefully and cautiously reconsider and with the hope that if you are faithful to Christ that you will continue in Him, grounded and settled and unmoved from the hope of the gospel.

What are the vital truths from God's Word?

1. God has a message of good cheer for those who are doing His will.

Many things arise to vex our souls and try our patience, but in the darkest hours and in the face of greatest obstacles, the message of the Bible is one of **good cheer**.

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye

might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

How meaningful was this message to the forlorn disciples? When Paul was threatened with violence in Jerusalem, the chief captain had to rescue him from the mob by soldiers lest he be killed. That night, Acts 23:11 says:

“The Lord stood up by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul.”

What a comfort to have the Lord stand by under such trying circumstances! What a comfort to hear this message of good cheer! It was also a personal message as Paul was called by name.

How children of God today need the message of “good cheer,” with the bruising sometimes suffered at the hands of the world. As they try to live their best for God, the “good cheer” message from the Lord is most welcome.

2. God will help in time of temptation.

An old song says, “Oh how the world to evil allures me! O how my heart is tempted to sin!” It has always been Satan’s business to cause us to stumble and fall, and you can be sure, not a single servant of the Lord will be left alone. The Tempter will work double overtime if need be, seeking our destruction. But God has promised to help us through the hard and difficult struggles.

Our Lord is the sympathizing Jesus as He looks down and beholds our troubles. Hebrews 4:15 says:

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

That verse is a reminder that Jesus knows the trials we are going through. Further, we are promised that:

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

How encouraging is this truth that God will help us. In time of temptation we are to *“come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:16).

3. God will never leave us nor forsake us.

There are times when we may feel forsaken. Friends let us down, loved ones are taken in death, health may fail, financial difficulties may beset, we feel alone and forsaken. But, in such times, Jesus is near. Hebrews 13:5,6 says:

“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

*So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper,
and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."*

In a similar vein of thought, 1 Peter 5:7 says:

*"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for
you."*

In addition, there is this passage from Romans 8:35-39:

*"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or
famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is
written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long;
we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in
all these things we are more than conquerors
through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that
neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principal-
ties, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to
come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature,
shall be able to separate us from the love of God,
which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

With these thoughts in mind, a song writer has written
such comforting words as:

Earthly friends may prove untrue,
Doubts and fears assail;
One still loves and cares for you;
Jesus never fails.

Though the sky be dark and drear;

Fierce and strong the gale,
Just remember He is near.
And He will not fail.

Still another has written:

Does Jesus care when my heart is pained
Too deeply for mirth and song;
As the burdens press, and the cares distress,
And the way grows weary and long?

Does Jesus care when my way is dark
With a nameless dread and fear?
As the daylight fades into deep night shades
Does He care enough to be near?

Does Jesus care when I've said "good-bye"
To the dearest on earth to me.
And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks,
Is it aught to Him? Does He see?

O, yes, He cares; I know He cares,
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary,
I know my Saviour cares.

4. God will hear and answer prayers.

1 Peter 3:12 declares:

"The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and his ears are open to their prayers."

1 John 3:21 says:

"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And what so ever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

Friends, these are clear promises from God that He hears and answers prayers. The mouth of faith utters them and the God of faith answers them.

Our needs are so varied! But God is so great. Ephesians 3:20 says:

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

So, from the standpoint of ability, nothing is too big for God. Let us pray and not lose heart.

5. All other ways to live are doomed for destruction.

We are encouraged to live faithfully for God, because all other ways are to end in destruction. Have you ever thought "Well, I'm going to quit the Lord and live some other way?" But if we leave Jesus, what then? To whom do we go? As Peter said, *"Thou hast the words of eternal life"* (John 6:68).

Conclusion

If you are a Christian, hold fast the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the end. There are so many truths

in God's Word to lift us up and strengthen us. If you have become a prodigal, loosing your way from God, won't you see this morning what you are missing? Won't you see that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God? It is an impossible thing to live successfully in life (with all of its ups and downs and trials and tribulations) apart from God who has given us life to begin with.

My friend, if you turn Him down here, He will turn you down there! Living for this life only, you will be robbed of the next.

Come in obedience to the Lord today, believing and being baptized for the blotting out of your sins.

Thank you for being with us.

Human Suffering

Introduction

If you are looking for suffering, just look around you. A young far-eastern prince, about to ascend the throne, was keenly aware of his need for more knowledge and wisdom. So, he summoned all the wise men in the realm and required of them to make a history of the human race. After many years of arduous labor, they presented their ruler the fruits of their labor — 6,000 volumes! The King told the wise men of his court to reduce their findings to one book — one volume. More time transpired and the wise men presented their single book to the King. But now, after so much time, the King required the wise men's findings be shorter still. He wanted it condensed into a few words. One of the wise men finally did so and said these words: **“They lived. They Suffered. They Died.”**

Friends, suffering and sorrow are not things that just happen to other people; it is a universal problem. Mankind and suffering are inseparably linked. From the cradle to the grave we must suffer. Job 14:1,2 says:

“Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.”

Good morning, friends, and welcome to the “Words of

Life" gospel broadcast. Before we proceed into a study about "Human Suffering," allow me to extend to you and your family an invitation to attend the worship services of the Mountain Home Church of Christ. Our church building is located at the corner of College and North Streets. We meet this morning at 9:30 and 10:20 AM and this evening at 6:00 PM, and each Wednesday evening at 7:00 PM.

Come with:

A Bible in your hand
A friend by your side
A smile on your face
A song in your heart.

Discussion

False Views About Suffering.

As suffering is definitely a part of our existence, many false views about suffering are believed. Some say suffering and pain are just an illusion; they don't really exist; they are all in the mind. Mary Baker Eddy and her followers in the Christian Science movement hold to this concept. They tell us that suffering is the result of wrong thinking, rather than being an actual reality in the physical world. But the problem is that when you are face to face with some deadly disease or extensive injury of some kind, the agony of your experience is all **too real**; if it's an illusion, it is a **real illusion**! To think of the hurt as an imaginary experience seems rather unconvincing.

On the humorous side of things, a story is told of a little boy staying with an aunt who happened to believe that suffering was an illusion. The little boy ate too many green apples and developed a powerful stomach ache. He complained to his aunt who tried to reassure the little boy that it was all in his mind, and that it wasn't real. The little boy, however, would not agree. His stomach did hurt. He finally stated to his aunt, "You don't understand. My stomach does hurt, I've got **inside information!**"

Friends, our pains and hurts are real, aren't they? Some say, "Suffering is the result of sin." While it is true that some sorrow is a direct consequence of sin, yet it would be a mistake to say that **all** suffering is the result of sin.

Job's three friends argued that Job was guilty of and concealed secret sin(s). His friends said he was guilty of sin and that explained his suffering, but Job was innocent. There were other reasons for Job's numerous and grievous afflictions.

Jesus taught that bad things do not occur to people because they are more wicked than the rest (Luke 13:1-5).

Many even say today that if you are truly spiritual, you will be exempt from sickness and suffering. Yet, once again, the Bible tells us of spiritual giants, and they suffered greatly. Paul had a thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7); Timothy had a stomach disorder (1 Timothy 5:23); and a great Christian named Epaphroditus became so sick he nearly died (Philippians 2:25,26).

Friends, the truth is, God does not exempt His own people from trials and difficulties. **We will not get to the Promised Land without going through the wilderness.**

1. Why Suffering?

We ask the question, "Why is there suffering?" "Why didn't God make a world without suffering and evil things?"

Let us point out that God has made such a place, that is, a place of perfection: a place that is absent of pain and sorrow. Such a place is not of this world, but in the world which is to come.

God did prepare this life as a preparation for and a proving ground for the world that is beyond. In this life God has created man with free moral agency. God made (created) man so as to allow him to freely choose to follow God or depart from Him through the avenues of sin. Such freedom involves choices, and choices involve consequences. Without choice, we are not free. Joshua 24:15 says:

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

As long as man has power and ability to freely choose, there is going to be a measure of suffering in the world,

because men will sometimes choose to do wrong; in doing so, consequences, sometimes *bad* and *bitter* consequences, will result.

And note this: If man had been created without the capacity to make decisions, then man would have been reduced to nothing more than a robot of some kind.

Is suffering God's will? Whenever there is a fatal accident or car crash or some other mishap someone may say, "Oh, well, it was God's will!" *Was it?* Was it really the Lord's will that a man get drunk and run his pick-up into a school bus full of children? Was it God's will that a driver speeds on the wrong side of the road? God will not overrule the decisions of men and stop them from doing what is wrong, nor will He cause a truck to vaporize before it hits another vehicle. Such interference would negate the free will of men.

God is not to be blamed for our suffering. But God will not allow sins to be unpunished either. When we contemplate the harsh consequences of our wrong doing, we should remember that the Bible teaches:

"The way of the transgressor is hard" (Proverbs 13:15).

2. Why Do the Good Suffer?

Sometimes it even seems as if the righteous suffer more than the wicked. Revelation 6 teaches that some of God's people suffer for righteousness sake. Jesus said:

"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" (Matthew 5:10-12).

If God were to exempt the Christian from suffering, this would in effect negate man's free will, because this would place an inordinate pull on man to become a Christian in order to escape suffering. Both God's sovereignty and man's free will must be kept intact.

3. The Good of Suffering

To speak of the good of suffering is to point out that suffering has certain benefits to come from it.

When we suffer, we become more sympathetic to the wounds of others. We are able to comfort those around us, even as we ourselves have been comforted. We learn what it means to "walk in their shoes". Hebrews 2:18 says:

"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

David also pointed out, *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I may learn from thy statutes"* (Psalm 119:71). David's hurtful misfortunes caused him to draw closer to the Word of God and to the God of the Word.

It was Paul, the suffering apostle, who pointed out, "We

also rejoice in our tribulations; knowing that tribulation worketh steadfastness; and steadfastness, approvedness; and approvedness, hope" (Romans 5:3,4). We learn things in the furnace of affliction that we would learn nowhere else.

Longfellow, the poet, wrote: "Into each life some rain must fall, some days must be dark and dreary." E.H. Chapin: "The brightest crowns that are worn in heaven have been tried, and smelted, and polished and glorified through the furnace of tribulation." (On earth).

Suffering teaches the lessons of sympathy, humility, patience, endurance, etc.

My friends, no matter how much our troubles seem to tumble in on top of us, we do not despair. Jesus said:

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

We must **learn to lean**, not upon ourselves, but upon God. The words of Paul are so meaningful:

"For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead:

Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us" (2 Corinthians 1:8-10).

How can we bear it; all the sufferings of this life? The Bible describes our life here as a temporary sojourn through which we pass into a land fairer than day. We, like Abraham, must look "for a city" (Hebrews 11:10). And remember, Romans 8:18:

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward."

Jesus said:

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

We close with the words of a beautiful poem:

God hath not promised skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways all our life through.
God hath not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.

God hath not promised we shall not know
Toil and temptation, trouble and woe.
He hath not told us we shall not bear
Many a burden, many a care.

But God hath promised strength for the day,

Rest for the laborer, light for the way,
Grace for the trials, help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, undying love.

Thanks for being with us today.

Trust in God

Introduction

The motto found inscribed on numerous American coins says, "In God We Trust". Such words seem out of place in a society where the highest goal in life, for so many people, is **pleasure**. We do live in a **hedonistic** or pleasure-seeking, pleasure-oriented society,

In addition, many people have de-regulated religion and any belief of spiritual matters, to the low level of superstition and/or myth. Many will plainly tell you that man has sufficient strength within himself to solve all of his problems without help from a being called God. Today, we are going to talk about **Trusting In God!**

Good morning, friends, and welcome to the "Words of Life" gospel broadcast. We hope all is well with you today. This year is rapidly getting away from us, and before too much of our speaking time gets away from us this morning, allow me the pleasure of inviting you and yours to attend the worship services of the Mountain Home Church of Christ. Our church building is located at the corner of College and North Streets. We meet together at 9:30, 10:20 AM and 6:00 PM, and each Wednesday evening at 7:00 PM. We want you to know that you would be an honored member of our assembly any time you would care to come. **We will be glad you came and we believe you will be glad you came also.**

Come with:

A Bible in your hand
A friend by your side
A smile on your face
A song in your heart.

Friends, permit me to relate to you a little story which illustrates *how hard* it is *to have trust*:

A tourist came too close to the edge of the Grand Canyon, lost his footing and plunged accidentally over the side; clawing and scratching to save himself, he managed to grab onto a bush jutting out from the side. He held on tight in desperation and cried out: "Is anyone up there?" A powerful voice from heaven said, "Yes." The man said, "Can you help me?" The voice from above replied, "Yes, I can!" The man explained he needed help because he had fallen over a cliff and was hanging on for dear life. "Do you believe, really believe me?" the voice asked. "Yes, by all means I do, I really do!" "Do you have faith?" "Yes, I do!" Then the voice said, "Well, in that case, simply let go of the bush and everything will turn out fine." There was a long, long, very tense pause, and then the man yelled out, "Is there anyone else up there?"

Friends, it's one thing *to say we trust in God*, but quite another to **actually practice it**.

There are all kinds of attitudes about all kinds of matters and things in our society. Some attitudes could be called selfish or egotistical, others could be called good or wholesome. There are also attitudes of pride, indifference, and skepticism. Unfortunately, some people manifest some of these bad attitudes toward the Lord. In every life that desires to be happy and contented, that attitude toward God is called, "Trust".

Imagine just for a moment what it would be like (for just one moment now) if God were to withhold from us all that we take for granted. The sunshine, the air we breathe, etc., would no longer exist. What would happen? **It would result in catastrophe with consequences beyond human imagination to comprehend!** We simply cannot successfully exist were it not for trusting God for the simple, common, ordinary, everyday things.

The Word of God declares that we are to:

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not on thine own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5).

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:3,4).

Many have found out (the hard way) that they cannot place their ultimate trust in wealth. All around us lies the rubbish and the debris of shattered lives, broken and aching

hearts, along with the blighted hopes of all those who put their trust in **green dollars** instead of **God**. Trusting in **riches** instead of the **Redeemer** has led to ruin! And great has been the ruin of all those lives!

Men who have had millions have turned around and lost it all in a few months or weeks, or days, or even hours.

Many have trusted in military might, glory and physical strength. Great and powerful armies have marched confidently on to the field of battle with pride, only to suffer humiliating defeat. Great men of physical strength and stature have dared the world by flexing their muscles, but they too have abruptly discovered someone else whose muscles were bigger! Remember the story of David and Goliath. Goliath, the Philistine giant thought he would make short work of a Hebrew shepherd boy. But "little boy David" hurled a stone from his sling which carried the force of a high-powered rifle. The giant Goliath's death proved the fallacy of his reasoning, didn't it? And young David became an overnight hero among his people. His was truly the **victory of faith**. David, even as a youngster, placed his trust in the Eternal God; Goliath did not. The difference was highly significant and notable. There are tremendous benefits, indeed, as a result of learning to live a life of trusting in God. Do you have any giants in your life that need to be slain? Deal with those giants from the standpoint of trusting in God and victory will be yours.

There are so many times and occasions in life when the

way is dark and drear. Such was true in the life of another young man of great faith named Joseph. Relying on nothing but his trust in the providential power of God, this young man Joseph endured slavery, slander, envy, jealousy, false accusation, disappointment, to say nothing of deception and maltreatment. Through it all, and out of it all, **God led him, guided him and guarded him.** How great is the God that can do such things!!!

Joseph's trust in his God did not falter, and my friend, your trust in God will never be misplaced. God is a refuge and strength. Proverbs 18:10 says, "*The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.*" Joseph went from the **pit** to the **prison** to the **palace**, by trusting in God.

Someone pointed out that to reach the attitude of distrust "is to descend into a dark and fearful valley through which one gropes his way and stumbles along never to rejoice in the light, but to dwell forever in the despair of the blackest darkness imaginable!"

In every life that is to be **worthwhile** and **worth living**, there must be the attitude of trust. When trust is gone, hope is gone. And when hope is gone, **all is gone!** The life without hope bleeds out its time of existence and loses all strength. Trust motivates men and women to noble efforts and excellence in the pursuit of goals. Trust also provides strength in time of trouble and distress.

At some time or point in life **everyone** has found it nec-

essary to trust **someone**. A baby's cry indicates hunger or some sort of discomfort. That baby soon learns to trust that someone nearby will come to the rescue. The infant **learns to trust**, in other words. Trust is an attitude that is learned.

Some men try to avoid it, but the plain matter of fact is, that **all men must trust God**, that is, if they expect to get **the most good** out of life. We must acknowledge that, to a degree, people already trust God. For example, we trust the Lord to guide, guard, and keep the universe in order. The benevolence of God is bestowed on rich and poor alike, the good and the bad, and men take it for granted.

Paul, the great apostle, is another who trusted in the Lord. Such trust in the Lord (and in the Lord's power) enabled him to labor and suffer reproach gladly (1 Timothy 4:10). That same trust in God (if it would be a predominant characteristic of our lives, as it was with men like David, Joseph and Paul) will help us to realize that we should change the things that we can, that need changing, but endure gracefully all the other things we cannot change.

No one is infallible or invincible, of course. But it cannot be denied that trust in God has enabled many people to endure misfortunes and sufferings in their lives and throughout their lives.

Trusting in God will

- dissolve your doubts
- satisfy your longings

- brighten your days
- enrich your life
- reward your labors and
- help make certain of your salvation.

Trusting in God has delivering power

- in days of despair, trust in God will deliver you
- in times of temptation, trust in God will deliver you
- in hours of harm, trust in God will deliver you
- in nights of sorrow and
- in torments of troubles, trust in God will deliver you.

The way to *stay close to God, stay on course with God, to sweeten and strengthen your trust in God, is to continue in His Word.*

Sincere trust in God will help us forget the past, rise over the obstacles which are in our way, live rich, full, beautiful, active lives in service to God.

The early church, the one we read about in the Bible, overcame every obstacle in their pathway and by trust in God, overcame everything that would have impeded their journey of faith. With confidence we can say today, like they of old, "*Cast all of your care upon him; for he careth for you*" (1 Peter 5:7). Paul made the soul-stirring magnif-

icent statement that, *“I know whom I have believed. . .”* (2 Timothy 1:12).

In the final windup, our lives will either be **towers of strength** or **marshmallows of weakness**. To **trust** or **not to trust**, that is the question:

The words of an old song go like this:

“When we walk with the Lord
in the light of His word,
What a glory He sheds on our way.
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still
And with all who will trust and obey.
Trust and obey, for there’s no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”

My friend, God says to you in His Word, to *“repent and be baptized. . .”* (Acts 2:38). Will you begin a life of **trust in God** today?

Trusting in God, will

- open for you the windows of heaven’s blessing
- strengthen you against the powers of evil, and
- help you to experience the joys of eternity.

Thanks for being with us today. May God bless you is our prayer.

Worshipping God

Introduction

The greatest thing in the Christian's life is to worship God. Man worshipping God is as natural as flowers turning toward the sun. In worship we offer our best to God. Just as the ancient Hebrews gave the first and the best of their animals in sacrifice to God, so Christians seek to offer their best unto God as well. After all, if worship costs nothing, it is worth nothing.

Good morning to all listening. You are listening to the "Words of Life" gospel broadcast. This program is presented by the Mountain Home Church of Christ meeting at the College and North Streets.

I wish to take this opportunity to invite you to attend the worship services of the Mountain Home Church of Christ. We meet this morning at 9:30, 10:20 AM and 6:00 PM. Each Wednesday evening at 7:00 PM.

Come with:

A Bible in your hand
A friend by your side
A smile on your face
A song in your heart.

Have you ever considered what it means to worship God?

William Temple stated:

“To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the trust of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.”

Worship was the subject of interest as Jesus was in a discussion with a woman at Jacob's well in John 4:19-24:

“The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Unfortunately, there have been many abuses in worship services.

1. There has been confusion between worship and entertainment. Today it seems that much of religion can be characterized as being **man-centered**. Whether it be the

extremely elaborate church buildings, robed choirs or even robed ministers behind the pulpit; it all seems to point back to man and emphasize the human element in everything and only meager thought is given to how the Lord feels about matters. My friends, **worship is one thing and entertainment is another.** It is dangerous business to play at holy things. God wants **servants, not performers.**

One religious writer put it this way: "Worship is an inward reverence, the bowing down of the soul in the presence of God, an awesome dependence on Him: a solemn consciousness of the Divine, a secret communion with the unseen." Worship is one thing and entertainment is another. That does not mean you can't enjoy worshipping God, but it simply means that human entertainment is not the purpose for which you have gathered with other Christians. A Sunday evening worship service is not to become an "Entertainment Tonight" rerun! In worship, as well as in life, **God does not need performers; He needs servants!**

2. Another abuse may be seen in the form of the services. There are two extremes. In some religious groups is found a cold formalism and ritualism. On the other hand (at the opposite extreme) there are services which seem to be without plan or orderliness and can become little more than some sort of *emotional orgy!* Either extreme is wrong!

3. Then there is such a thing as vain worship. Worship, both in object and manner, can be perverted.

Writing to the Romans, Paul spoke of those *“who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator”* (Romans 1:25). They changed the glory of God into idols and images, so God wiped or cleared His hands of them. Paul was confronted with the many idols and monuments of heathen gods in Athens, Greece and said this, *“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent”* (Acts 17:30). Certainly God is a jealous God, and there can be no other gods before Him. In Matthew 4:10 Jesus said, *“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve.”*

It is alarming to think that people can worship the Lord in a vain manner; a manner that is not pleasing to God. Jesus said:

“This people draweth nigh unto me with the mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”
(Matthew 15:8,9).

When the simple and true teachings of Christ are substituted and replaced by the “I want to’s” or “It seems to me’s” of men, then men worship in vain. Worship must be first and foremost **God-pleasing, not man-pleasing**; it must be **God-oriented, not man-oriented**. All expressions of our worship to God and Christ must be **heaven-centered, not human-centered**.

The scriptures teach that worship to God must be *“in spirit and in truth”*. “In spirit” means with the right attitude and “in truth” means in the right way. Jesus said, *“Thy word is truth”* (John 17:17b). If worship is in truth, it must be according to the Bible.

God despises the shallow worship of an insincere person. Listen for a moment to the prophet Amos:

“I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs..... But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream” (Amos 5:21-24)

These words of rebuke from the Lord refer to Old Testament acts of worship, but the fact that shallow worship is repulsive to God is established. We need to put our whole heart, soul, mind and strength into the worship of God.

The Bible gives several principles that should govern all scriptural worship services:

1. 1 Corinthians 14:40 says, *“Let all things be done decently and in order.”* No! Worship to God should not be mere formalism; it is a time for respect and orderliness. It should not be cold, heartless and dead, but warm, enthusiastic and alive.

2. In 1 Corinthians 14:26 Paul wrote: "*Let all things be done unto edifying.*" Worship should build us up. If words in worship are not understood, then they cannot be edifying. Worship should not be **confusing gibberish but intelligible communication.**

From studying the New Testament it is plain that the first-century church worship consisted of certain actions:

1. In Acts 20:7 "*Upon the first day . . .*" This shows that **the Lord's Supper** (breaking bread) was partaken of on the first day of the week. Every able-bodied child of God ought to gather each Lord's Day around the Lord's Table.

2. Acts 2:42 lists other acts of worship of the early church. The disciples "*continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine . . .*" Doctrine is **teaching or preaching.** Prayer is communication with God.

3. In 1 Corinthians 16:1,2 the action of **giving** is mentioned.

4. In Ephesians 5:19 **singing** is mentioned as also a part of worship. Singing is a wonderful way to express the adoration of the heart of God.

Conclusion

In closing, I stress the value of worshipping God acceptably. Its value is two-fold; for God and for man. The Heavenly Father is worthy of all our praise, as His dear Son

died for us, and God is pleased when we draw near to Him in the appropriate ways.

As human beings, we have the tendency to become like the God we worship. By worshipping God, we become more godly. Every man and woman needs to worship God: some realize that and some do not. The whole of man needs to worship and the part of us that will live forever needs to worship most.

May God bless you is our prayer, and good day.

Be Not Weary in Well Doing

Introduction

Nothing in the world is attractive about a quitter. Don't be a quitter. James J. Corbet said, "Just fight one more round." The Bible says it this way, "*be not weary in well doing.*" Jesus said to bear your cross, not drag it through the mud. So, don't quit trying to do the best you can that which you know to be right.

Good morning, friends, and welcome to the "Words of Life" gospel broadcast presented to you by the Mountain Home Church of Christ meeting at College and North Streets. The message we have today is one designed to encourage you to live the Christian life.

But first, allow me this opportunity once again to invite you to attend the worship services of the Mountain Home Church of Christ.

Come with:

A Bible in your hand
A friend by your side
A smile on your face
A song in your heart.

Lesson

Why is it? Why do people grow weary in well doing? Galatians 6:9 says, *“Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”*

The devil and all his crowd don't get discouraged in evil doing, but sometimes the Lord's people **do get discouraged**. Surely the devil and his gang should get discouraged in their enterprises, for the future is anything but optimistic for them. Besides, there is plenty enough in sin to worry anyone. But the devil just doesn't seem to get discouraged.

Make no mistake about it, my friends, the devil, and all the legions of hell itself, are out to cause Christians to become weary in well doing. Satan knows that discouragement is weakness and weakness leads to defeat. The devil is constantly about his task throughout the land, working to dishearten the people of God.

Why do you suppose God's people often give up in doing right? Perhaps we can mention some things worth considering as an answer to that question.

1. Some people grow weary in well doing because they expect the wrong things.

For many people, when they become Christians, they expect everybody to immediately see things the way they do. As Christians, they see matters in a vastly different light, and they can't understand why everyone else doesn't see things in this new light as well.

Perhaps they expect everyone else to accept the Lord

and obey the gospel as they have done. This just doesn't happen. If you suppose that because you have gotten your eyes open to truth, that everyone else will automatically do the same, then you are supposing wrong.

If you expect everyone else to become interested in spiritual things just because you have; it just doesn't happen that way.

Then too, if you expect to find perfection in human beings who make up the church, you also are getting ready to be discouraged. Because we sometimes set ourselves up to expect the wrong things, we are setting ourselves up to become disgruntled and disillusioned. This is why many become discouraged. They expect the wrong thing.

Now, let me say something right here that may help solve this problem. In religion, you must accept the Lord Jesus Christ and center your life around Him, regardless of what others will do. You follow the Lord and no matter what happens, **don't lose your faith in God.** Don't put your confidence and faith in men, but in God who is steadfast forever.

2. Some people grow weary in well doing because they let their feelings get the best of them.

Some people live their lives solely based on how they "feel" or the particular mood they happen to be in at the moment.

In the parable of the Sower (Luke 8), Jesus pictured the

seed falling into rocky ground. Immediately it sprang up and flourished until the hot sun arose. Then it withered and died. Many people are exactly that way. When they first hear the word of God, they receive it with joy. But when hard times come, the many trials and tribulations that intrude, they wither and fade away and die. This is a real picture of overly emotional people. They start out in a big way, to be **whirlwinds for God**, but it doesn't last. Something happens and they go **down, down, down, slower, slower, and slower** until they are out completely. They lack stability. They are shallow. Haven't you seen people in the church like this? Such people are as unreliable as the devil can make them.

The lesson to learn is to stay on an even keel as much as possible. Don't become **too elated** as things **go right** and don't become **too discouraged** as things **go wrong**. Stay as evenly balanced as possible. A level head is much more to be desired than uncontrolled feelings. If you go on feelings alone, things are going to change with the prevailing circumstances. We need a personal discipline that overrides emotion.

3. Some people get discouraged because they forget what is their part and what is God's.

The church was already here before you and I became members of it. It will be here after you and I are gone. The gospel was preached before you and I ever heard it. It will be preached after you and I are dead. When we die, all truth

and righteousness on earth will not die with us.

But some begin to feel that nobody else is even trying to do right anymore. All they can see is ungodliness. But the prophet Elijah felt that way at one time. He became very despondent in 1 Kings 19; yet, the Lord explained to him that He still had a faithful remnant.

One way to keep from being discouraged is to remember what our part is. Our part is to live a faithful life as much as possible (Revelation 2:10). Don't worry about God. He will take care of the rest. He brought the church into existence and He will preserve it. He ordained righteousness and He will see that the salt of the earth always exists.

4. Some people get discouraged because they fail to enjoy the good things of the Christian life.

Some people act as if God died last night! They act as if everything is a momentous crisis and there is nothing to be thankful for. They are always grumbling about something every time you see them. Oh! It's no wonder they get discouraged! Who wouldn't? Living in an atmosphere of narrow selfishness and black negativism leads to a discouragement that is deadly.

5. Some people get discouraged because they lose sight of ultimate victory and reward.

If your mind constantly dwells on the weakness of the church or handicaps that you have personally, discourage-

ment isn't very far away. If all you see are obstacles and barriers, you will eventually become weary in well doing. If you see sinners but not saints; if you see only those who are offended and turn away (and not the ones who gladly accept the truth); you'll be down and out in no time.

We must bear in mind that the cause of goodness and righteousness will ultimately triumph (1 John 2:15-17). Remember, Galatians 6:9 says, "*Be not weary in well doing for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.*"

The assurance of final triumph will lift us up and carry us on. One writer put it this way:

"Every discouraged soul should look at Jesus as He went to the cross! How black things looked in that hour! One of His followers betrayed Him to His enemies. Another denied Him. The others forsook Him. The whole city cried out, '*Away with Him; crucify Him*'. But as He hung there on the cross, thirsty and bloody, the Bible says of Him, '*Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*' (Hebrews 12:2).

Why could Jesus endure all that came upon Him? Because He looked ahead to the reward of His struggles. Notice what the next verse says:

"For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and

faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Hebrews 12:3,4).

What a lesson for each of us if we are tempted to be weary!

6. Some people become discouraged because they lose their spiritual touch with God.

Some of God's people quit praying. **Backsliding often starts when knee bending stops!** When we lose touch with God, everything after that seems wrong. We must constantly keep in touch with the Lord, lest we drift away (Hebrews 2:1). There are times when we need our joy replenished by continued contact with spiritual things. Colossians 3:1,2 says:

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.”

Never forget that high plane of life God has called us to. Remember all the blessings and privileges that belong to a Christian. Faith, hope, joy, love, peace and assurance are all things that we have, that helps banish despondency and discouragement.

Christianity is a **faith worth having.**

Christ is a Saviour **worth loving.**

Christian life is a **life worth living.**

Focus upon the benefits and advantages of being a child of God.

2 Peter 1:3 says:

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:"

Remember the things you have already overcome. Once there was hatred; now there is **holiness**; once there was drunkenness, now there is **decency**; once there was darkness, now there is **delight**.

Ephesians 1:3,4 says:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:"

Whatever the cause of any discouragement, if you'll think about it, it can be overcome by the positive benefits heaven has made possible to us.

Don't give **up, out or in!** You have:

a conscience to live with

a creed to live by

a cause to live for

a crown to look forward to.

2 Timothy 4:8, the apostle wrote:

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Conclusion

Are you a Christian? Being a Christian doesn't mean a problem free life, it just means a power to overcome all problems (1 John 5:4).

By faith turn from your sins and confess Christ as God's Son and be baptized (immersed in water) for the remission or forgiveness of all the wrongs in your life.

Thanks for tuning in and being with us today.